

In the letter entitled **SUSPENSION OF ACTION, POSSIBLE INTERFERENCE**, which was mailed on November 22, 1996, the Examiner advised that claims 1-9 and 13-14 are allowable, and that claims 1-14 can be allowed on a separate patent. The Examiner also advised in that letter that claims 1-9 interfere with the O'Neill U.S. Patent No. 5,268,181, and that due to the potential interference, *ex parte* prosecution was suspended for a period of six months from the date of that letter.

In view of the letter issued by the USPTO and mailed on November 22, 1996, it is unclear as to the status of claim 15, as filed via the amendment dated August 5, 1996 and amended via the amendment filed on August 27, 1996. It is also unclear as to the status of the amendment made to claim 1 via the amendment filed on August 27, 1996. Clarification is respectfully solicited.

Moreover, it is respectfully submitted that the six-month suspension of *ex parte* prosecution expired on May 22, 1997.

Applicant requests reconsideration of the claims on their merits and respectfully solicits early notification of an allowance. No new matter has been introduced. If Examiner Venkat should have any questions or believe a telephone discussion or a personal interview would expedite prosecution, the examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any deficiency or credit any overpayment, and charge any fees due such as extension of time fees, to deposit account no. 10-0047(PMANSO).

Respectfully Submitted,

8-4-97  
Date

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